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No. 84-1867

IN THE

Supreme Court of the United States

OCTOBER TERM, 1985

MARY L. GILLIES,

Petitioner,

v.

GEORGE DELOZIER, JR., *et al.*,

Respondents.

Petition for Writ of Certiorari to the United States Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit

BRIEF OF RESPONDENTS GEORGE DELOZIER & GEORGE GIBSON IN OPPOSITION TO PETITION FOR WRIT OF CERTIORARI

THOMAS A. FARRINGTON, ESQUIRE
9200 Basil Court, #204
Landover, Maryland 20785
(301) 322-4000

EDWARD J. GORMAN, JR., ESQUIRE
GORMAN & CANFIELD
4701 Sangamore Road
Bethesda, Maryland 20816
(301) 229-7500

Counsel for Respondents Delozier & Gibson

PRESS OF BYRON S. ADAMS, WASHINGTON, D.C. (202) 347-8203

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COUNTER-STATEMENT OF QUESTIONS PRESENTED

I. Did the Court of Appeals properly rule that petitioner's claim under 42 U.S.C. § 1983 fails because she has not alleged a deprivation of a right protected by the Constitution or laws of the United States

II. Did the Court of Appeals properly rule that petitioner's claim under 42 U.S.C. § 1985 fails because she has not alleged any facts supporting her conclusory allegations that the defendants conspired to deprive her of the equal protection of the laws and equal privileges and immunities under the laws.

ADDITION TO THE LIST OF ALL PARTIES

THOMAS A. FARRINGTON, ESQUIRE
Counsel for Respondents,
Delozier & Gibson
9200 Basil Court, #204
Landover, Maryland 20785
(301) 322-4000

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BRIEF OF RESPONDENTS GEORGE DELOZIER & GEORGE GIBSON IN OPPOSITION TO PETITION FOR WRIT OF CERTIORARI

The respondents George Delozier, Jr. and George Gibson respectfully request that this Court deny the petition for a writ of certiorari seeking a review of the opinion of the Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit in this case. That opinion is set forth at Pet. App. 16a-20a

COUNTER-STATEMENT OF THE CASE

The respondents Delozier and Gibson adopt the counter-statement of the case as set forth in the brief of respondents

S.L. Nusbaum & Co., Inc., and St. Mary's Square Merchants Association.

ARGUMENT FOR DENYING THE WRIT

I. Personal Injury Allegedly Suffered As A Result Of A State Official's Simple Negligence Does Not Amount To A Loss of Liberty Under The Constitution Or Laws Of The United States

A. Personal Injury Allegedly Suffered As A Result Of A State Official's Simple Negligence Is Not Actionable Under 42 U.S.C. § 1983

To maintain an action under 42 U.S.C. § 1983, two elements must be alleged. First, the conduct complained of must have been done by one acting under the color of state law; and second, said conduct must deprive the person of the rights, privileges or immunities secured by the Constitution or laws of the United States. *Parratt v. Taylor*, 451 U.S. 527, 535 (1981). It is true that the right not to be subjected to physical injury is a liberty interest. See *Juncker v. Tinney III et al.*, 549 F. Supp. 574, 576 (1982). The petitioner, however, has failed to allege deprivation of a liberty interest which is protected by the Constitution or laws of the United States.

The petitioner claims she sustained injuries as a result of the negligent failure of respondents Delozier and Gibson to prevent others from violating Maryland law. The petitioner also alleges that these respondents actively participated in that violation. The first element giving rise to a § 1983 action has been met. Delozier and Gibson are sheriffs who were acting in their official capacities at the time of the accident. However, the mere fact that the conduct of an individual acting under the color of State law results in injury does not necessarily amount to a deprivation of rights actionable under 42 U.S.C. § 1983. *Parratt v. Taylor, supra;*

Martinez v. California, 444 U.S. 277 (1980); *Baker v. McCollum*, 443 U.S. 137 (1979). To allege a deprivation of a liberty interest protected under the Fourteenth Amendment something more than mere negligence is required.

A constitutional deprivation "connotes an intentional act denying something to someone, or, at the very least, a deliberate decision not to act to prevent a loss." *Parratt*, 451 U.S. at 548 (Powell J. concurring). While the petitioner couches her claim in terms of a constitutional deprivation, the facts allege state only a claim for a common law tort. This Court has consistently rejected the notion that all common law torts committed by public officials acting under the color of state law automatically constitute violations of § 1983. *See Baker v. McCollum, supra, Estelle v. Gamble*, 429 U.S. 97 (1976); *Paul v. Davis*, 424 U.S. 693 (1976).

The proposition that mere negligence does not rise to the level of a constitutional deprivation of a liberty interest is illustrated by *Baker v. McCollum, supra*. In *Baker v. McCollum, supra*, the plaintiff had been in prison for eight (8) days after being arrested on a facially valid warrant. An action was brought under 42 U.S.C. § 1983 alleging a deprivation of a liberty interest without due process of law. The Court rejected the plaintiff's contention. It was pointed out that § 1983 does not impose liability for violations of the duty of care arising out of tort law.

In *Estelle v. Gamble, supra*, the Court held that medical malpractice does not become a constitutional violation simply because the victim is a prison inmate. The Court found that the mistreatment allegedly suffered by the complainant constituted nothing more than ordinary medical malpractice, which is actionable only under state law, and not under federal law. In order to state a cognizable claim under § 1983 for medical malpractice, the Court conclude that

"acts or omissions sufficiently harmful to evidence deliberate indifference to serious medical needs would have to be alleged."

In *Paul v. Davis*, *supra*, the plaintiff brought suit for defamation against state officials who distributed a flyer which identified the plaintiff as an active shoplifter. The plaintiff urged that her claim was actionable under 42 U.S.C. § 1983. The Court rejected plaintiff's argument stating that the alleged injury to plaintiff's reputation did not involve a liberty interest invoking the Fourteenth Amendment simply because it was perpetrated by a public official. Indeed, the Court specifically stated that such a reading of the Fourteenth Amendment would make § 1983 "a font of tort law to be super imposed on whatever systems may already be administered by the states." *Paul*, 424 U.S. at 699, 701.

The foregoing cases indicate that something more than mere negligence is required before an injury caused by a person acting under color of state law rises to the level of a constitutional deprivation. The plaintiff here has suffered an injury which was the result of at most mere negligence. There has been no constitutional deprivation of liberty. The petitioner has a tort claim in state court and no cognizable claim under 42 U.S.C.§ 1983.

B. The Grant Of Certiorari In *Daniels V. Williams* Makes Certiorari In This Case Inappropriate

The petitioner contends that the issues she raises are substantively the same as those raised by Roy E. Daniels in his brief on the merits filed with this Court. *See Daniels v. Williams*, 748 F.2d 229 (4th cir. 1984) *cert granted*, 469 U.S. ____ (1985) (No. 84-5872, 1984 term). In so contending the petitioner gives this Court a reason to deny her petition for writ of certiorari.

The Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit in *Danield v. Williams, supra*, decided that personal injury allegedly resulting from the negligent act of a state official is not a protectable liberty interest under the due process clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. On the basis of that decision, the Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit affirmed the holding of the District Court in this case. As the petitioner here points out, the issues in *Daniels* and *Gillies* are identical. The issues raised by the petitioner in *Gillies* add nothing to the issues presently before the Court in *Daniels*. Consequently, this court's understanding of the issues presented in *Daniels* and its decision-making process will not be enhanced by what would be a necessarily duplicative, unproductive review of this case.

II. Petitioner Has An Adequate Remedy At State Law Notwithstanding Maryland's Doctrine of Sovereign Immunity

A. The Grant of Certiorari In *Daniels v. Williams* Makes Certiorari In This Case Inappropriate

The respondents Delozier and Gibson reiterate the views expressed above in paragraph I (B). Granting the petition in *Gillies* would add nothing to the issues presently before the Court in *Daniels*. Petitioner's writ, therefore, should be denied.

B. Petitioner Has An Adequate Post Deprivation Remedy Under State Law Which Satisfies The Requirements Of Due Process

An issue before the Court in *Daniels, supra*, is whether or not allegations of a negligent deprivation of a liberty interest state a claim under 42 U.S.C. § 1983. Even should the Court answer that question in the affirmative, petitioner's writ should still be denied on the basis of the Court's holding in *Parratt, supra*.